

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BY THE AUTHOR OF "VIKEN," "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," ETC.

CHAPTER IX. "OF COLOUR PALE AND DEAD WAS SHE."

"AND so you are Daphne?" said Mr. Goring, taking both her hands, and looking at her with an amused smile, not without tender admiration of the fair pale face and widely-opened blue eyes. Months afterwards he remembered the scared look in those lovely eyes, the death-like pallor of the complexion; but just now he ascribed Daphne's evident agitation to a school-girl's natural discomfiture at being found out in a risky escapade. "And so you are Daphne?" he repeated. "Why, you told me your father was a grocer in Oxford Street. Was not that what school-boys call a crumper?"

"No," said Daphne, recovering herself, and a sparkle of mischief lighting up her eyes; "it was strictly true—of Martha Dibb's father."

"And you adopted your friend's parent for the nonce; a strictly Roman custom that of adoption, and in harmony with your Roman name. By the way, were you christened Poppæa Daphne, or Daphne Poppæa?"

He had been amusing himself with the squirrel for the last half-hour; but he found Daphne's embarrassment ever so much more amusing than the squirrel. He felt no more seriously about the one than about the other.

"Don't," exclaimed Daphne; "you must have known quite well from the first moment that my name wasn't Poppæa, just as well as I knew that yours wasn't Nero."

"Well, I had a shrewd suspicion that you were romancing about the name; but I swallowed the grocer. That was too bad of you. Do you know that you made me quite unhappy? I was miserable at the idea that such a girl as you could be allied with grocery. A ridiculous prejudice, was it not, in a man whose father began life as a day-labourer?"

Daphne had sunk into a low chair by the squirrel's cage, and was feeding that pampered favourite with the green points of some choice conifer. She seemed more taken up by his movements than by her future brother-in-law. Her agitation had passed, yet she was pale still, only the faintest bloom in her fair cheek, the pink of a wild-rose.

"Please don't tell Lina," she pleaded, with her eyes on the squirrel.

"Oh, she doesn't know anything about it then?"

"Not a word. I dared not tell her. When I tried to do so, I became suddenly aware how horridly I had behaved. Martha Dibb and I were silly, thoughtless creatures, acting on the impulse of the moment."

"I don't think there was much impulse about Miss Dibb," said Mr. Goring; "it seemed to me that she only looked on."

"It is disgustingly mean of you to say that!" exclaimed Daphne, recurring to her school-girl phraseology, which she had somewhat modified at South Hill.

"Forgive me. And I must really hold my tongue about our delicious picnics? Of course I shall obey you, little one. But I hate secrets, and I am a bad hand at keeping them. I shall never forget those two happy days at Fontainebleau. How strange that you and I, who were destined to

become brother and sister, should make each other's acquaintance in that haphazard, informal fashion. It seemed almost as if we were fated to meet, didn't it?"

"Was that the fate you read in my hand?"

"No," he answered, suddenly grave; "that was not what I read. Pshaw!" he added in a lighter tone, "chiromancy is all nonsense. Why should a man, not too much given to belief in the things that are good for him to believe, pin his faith on a fanciful science of that kind? I have left off looking at palms ever since that day at Fontainebleau. And now tell me about your sister. I am longing to see her. To think that I should have stumbled on just the one particular afternoon on which she was to be so long away! I pictured her sitting by yonder bamboo table, like Penelope waiting for her Odysseus. Do you know that I have come straight through from Bergen without stopping?"

"And you have not been home to your Abbey?"

"My Abbey will keep. By-the-bye, how is the place looking—the gardens in all their beauty, I suppose?"

"I have never seen it."

"Never! Why, I thought Lina would be driving over once or twice a week to survey her future domain. I take it positively unkind that you have never seen my abbey: my cloisters, where never monk walked; my refectory, where never monk eat; my chapel, where nobody ever worshipped. I should have thought curiosity would have impelled you to go and look at Goring Abbey. It is such a charming anomaly. But it pleased my poor father to build it, so I must not complain."

"I think you ought to be very proud of it when you consider how hard your father must have worked for the money it cost," said Daphne bluntly.

"Yes; William Giles had to put a long career of honest labour behind him, before he became William Goring and owner of Goring Abbey. He was a good old man. I feel sorry sometimes that I am not more like him."

"Lina says you are like your mother."

"Yes; I believe I resemble her side of the house. It was by no means the more meritorious side, for the Heronvilles were always loose fish, while my father was one of the best men who ever wore shoe-leather. Do you think Lina will be pleasantly surprised by my return?"

"Do I think it!" echoed Daphne. "Why,

she has been longing for your coming—counting every hour. I know that, though she has not said as much. I can read her thoughts."

"Clever little puss. Daphne, do you know I am quite delighted to find that my grocer's daughter of Fontainebleau Forest is to be my new sister."

"You are very good," returned Daphne rather stiffly. "It's eight o'clock, so I think, if you'll excuse me, I had better go and dress for dinner."

"Wait till your people come home. I've ever so many questions to ask."

"There is the carriage! You can ask them of Lina herself."

She ran out of the room by the glass door leading into the conservatory, leaving Mr. Goring to meet his betrothed at the opposite door. She ran through the conservatory to the garden. The sun was sinking in a sea of many-coloured clouds, yonder above the hills, and the river at the bottom of the valley ran between the rushes like liquid gold. Daphne stood on the sloping lawn staring at the light like a bewildered creature.

She stood thus for some minutes motionless, with clasped hands, gazing at the sunset. Then she turned and walked slowly back to the house. There was no one to watch her, no one to think of her at this moment. Gerald and Lina were together in the drawing-room, steeped in the rapture of reunion.

"Let me be rational, let me be reasonable if I can," Daphne said to herself. She re-entered the house by an obscure door at the east end, and went up to her own room. There, in the soft evening light, she cast herself upon her knees by the bed, and prayed: prayed with all the fervour of her untried soul, prayed that she might be kept from temptation and led to do the thing that was right. Prayer so earnest in a nature so light and reckless was a new experience. She rose from her knees like a new creature, and fancied she had plucked the evil weed of a fatal fancy out of her heart. She moved about her room calmly and quietly, dressed herself carefully, and went back to the drawing-room, two minutes before the half-hour, radiant and smiling.

Madoline was still in the gown she had worn at the déjeuner. She had taken off her hat, and that was all, too happy in her lover's company to spare five minutes for the revision of her toilet. Gerald had done nothing to improve his travelling attire.

Even the dust of the long railroad journey from Hull was still upon his clothes.

"Gerald tells me that you and he have made friends already, Daphne," said Lina in a happy voice.

She was standing by her lover's side in front of the open window, while Sir Vernon sat in a distant easy-chair devouring his Times, and trying to make up for the lost hours since the post came in.

"Yes; Daphne and I have sworn eternal friendship," exclaimed Gerald gaily. "We mean to be a most devoted brother and sister. It was quite wonderful how quickly we broke the ice, and how thoroughly at home we became in a quarter of an hour."

"Daphne is not a very terrible personage," said Madoline, smiling at her sister's bright young face. "Well, darling, had you a happy day all by yourself? I was almost glad you were not with us. The coming of age was a very tiresome business. I had ten times rather have been in our own gardens with you."

"The whole entertainment was ineffably dull," said Sir Vernon, without looking from his paper.

And now the well-bred butler glided across the threshold, and gently insinuated that dinner was served if it might be the pleasure of his people to come and eat it: whereupon Mr. Goring gave his arm to Madoline, and Sir Vernon for the first time since his younger daughter's return felt himself constrained to escort her to the dining-room, or leave her to follow in his wake like a lap-dog.

He deliberated for a moment or two as to which he should do, then made a hook of his elbow, and looked down at her dubiously, as much as to say that she might take it or leave it.

Daphne would have much liked to refuse the proffered boon, but she was in a dutiful mood to-night, so she meekly slipped her little gloved hand under her parent's sleeve, and walked by his side to the dining-room, where he let her hand drop directly they were inside the door.

Everyone at South Hill hated a glare, so the dining-room, like the drawing-room, was lighted by moderator lamps under velvet shades. Two large brazen lamps with deep-fringed purple shades hung a little way above the table; two more lighted the side-board. The French windows stood wide open, and across a balcony full of flowers appeared the shadowy landscape and the cool evening sky.

Sir Vernon was tired and out of spirits.

He had very little to say about anything except the proceedings of the afternoon, and all his remarks upon the hospitalities at which he had assisted were of an abusive character. He could eat no dinner, his internal economy having been thrown altogether out of gear by the barbarity of a solid meal at three o'clock. His discontent would have effectually damped the spirits of any human beings except lovers. Those privileged beings inhabit a world of their own, so Madoline and Gerald smiled at each other, and talked to each other across the roses and lilies that beautified the dinner-table, and seemed unconscious that anything unpleasant was going on.

Daphne watched them thoughtfully. How lovely her sister looked in the new light of this perfect happiness—how unaffectedly she revealed her delight at her lover's return!

"How good it was of you to come back a month sooner than you had promised, Gerald," she said.

"My dear girl, I have been pining to come home for the last six months, but, as you and your father and I had chalked out a certain portion of Europe which I was to travel over, I thought I ought to go through with it; but if you knew how heartily sick I am of going from pillar to post, of craning my neck to look at the roofs of churches, and dancing attendance upon grubby old sacristans, and riding up narrow pathways on mules, and having myself and my luggage registered through from the bustling commercial city I am sick of to loathing after twenty-four hours' experience, to the sleepy mediæval town which I inevitably tire of in ten, you would be able to understand my delight in coming back to you and placid Warwickshire. By-the-bye, why didn't you take Daphne to see the Abbey? She tells me she has never been over to Goring."

"I should have had no pleasure in showing her your house"—"Our house," interjected Gerald—"while you were away."

"Well, dearest, it was a loving fancy, so I won't scold you for it. We'll have a——" He paused for an instant, looking at Daphne with a mischievous smile. "We'll have a picnic there to-morrow."

"Why a picnic?" grumbled Sir Vernon. "I can understand people eating out of doors when they have no house to shelter them, but nobody but an idiot would squat on the grass to dine if he could get at chairs and tables. Look at your gipsies and hawkers now—you never catch them

picnicking. If their tent or their caravan is ever so small and stuffy they feed inside it."

"Never mind the hawkers," exclaimed Gerald contemptuously. "A fig for common-sense. Of course, everybody in his senses knows that such a dinner as this is much more comfortable than the most perfect picnic that ever was organised. But, for all that, I adore picnics, and we'll have one to-morrow, won't we, Daphne."

He looked across the table at her in the subdued lamp-light, smiling, and expecting to see a responsive smile in her eyes: but she was preternaturally grave.

"Just as you like," she said.

"Just as I like! What a chilling repulse. Why, unless Madoline and you approve of the idea, I don't care a straw for it. I'll punish you for your indifference, Miss Daphne. You shall have a formal luncheon in the refectory, at a table large enough for thirty, and groaning under my father's family plate—Garrard's, of the reign of Victoria, strictly ponderous and utilitarian. What a lovely light there is in the western sky," said Gerald, as Madoline and her sister rose from the table. "Shall we all walk down to the river, before we join Sir Vernon in the billiard-room? You'd like to try your hand against me, sir, I suppose, now that I come fresh from benighted lands where the tables have no pockets."

"Yes; I'll play a game with you presently."

Gerald and the two girls went into the verandah, and thence by a flight of shallow steps to the lawn. It was a peerless night after a peerless day. A young moon was shining above the topmost branches of the deodaras, and touching the Avon with patches of silvery-light. The scene was lovely, the atmosphere delicious, but Daphne felt that she was one too many, though Madoline had linked an arm through hers. Those two had so much to talk about, so many questions to ask each other.

"And you have really come home for good," said Madoline.

"For good, dearest; for the brightest fate that can befall a man, to marry the woman he loves and settle down to a peaceful placid life in the home of his—ancestor. I have been a rover quite long enough, and I shall rove no more except at your command."

"There are places I should love to visit with you, Gerald—Switzerland, Italy, the Tyrol."

"We will go wherever you please, dearest. It will be delightful to me to show you all that is fairest on this earth, and to hear you say, when we are hunting vainly for some undiscovered nook where we may escape from the tourist herd—'After all, there is no place like home.'"

"I shall only be too much inclined to say that. I love our own county, and the scenery I have known all my life."

"We must start early to-morrow, Lina. We have a great deal of business to get through at the Abbey."

"Business!"

"Yes, dear; I want you to give me your ideas about the building of new hot-houses. With your passion for flowers the present amount of glass will never be enough. What do you say to sending MacCloskie over to meet us there? His opinion as a practical man might be of use."

"If Mr. MacCloskie is going to picnic with you I'll stay at home," said Daphne. "I admire the gentleman as a gardener, but I detest him as a human being."

"Don't be frightened, Daphne," said Gerald, laughing. "It is a levelling age, but we have not yet come to picnicking with our gardeners."

"Mr. MacCloskie is such a very superior person, I don't know what he might expect."

They had strolled down to the meadow by the river, a long stretch of level pasture, richly timbered, divided from the gardens by a ha-ha, over which there was a light iron bridge. They lingered for a little while by this bridge, looking across at the river.

"Do you know that Daphne has started a boat," said Madoline, "and has become very expert with a pair of sculls. She rowed me down to Stratford the day before yesterday, and back against the stream."

"Indeed! I congratulate you on a delightful accomplishment, Daphne. I don't see why girls should not have their pleasure out of the river as well as boys. I've a brilliant idea. The Abbey is only five miles up the river. Suppose we charter Daphne's boat for to-morrow. I can pull a pretty good stroke, and the distance will be easy between us two. Will your boat hold three of us comfortably, do you think, Daphne?"

"It would hold six."

"Then consider your services retained for to-morrow. I shall enjoy the miniature prettiness of the Avon, after the mightier streams I have been upon lately."

"I don't suppose Lina would like it," faltered Daphne, not appearing elated at the idea.

"Lina would like it immensely," said her sister. "I shall feel so safe if you are with us, Gerald. What a strange girl you are, Daphne! A week ago you were eager to carry me to the end of the world in your boat."

"You can have the boat, of course, if you like, and I'll pull if you want me," returned Daphne, somewhat ungraciously; "but I think you'll find five miles of the Avon rather a monotonous business. It is a very lovely river if you take it in sections, but as both banks present a succession of green fields and pollard willows, it is just possible for the human mind to tire of it."

"Daphne, you are an absolute cynic—and at seventeen," exclaimed Gerald, with pretended horror. "What will you be by the time you are forty?"

"If I am alive I daresay I shall be a very horrid old woman," said Daphne. "Perhaps something after the pattern of Aunt Rhoda. I can't conceive anything much worse than that."

"Papa will be waiting for his game of billiards," said Lina. "We had better hurry back to the house."

They were met on the threshold of the conservatory by Mrs. Ferrers. That lady had a wonderful knack of getting acquainted with everything that happened at South Hill. If there had been a semaphore on the roof she could hardly have known things sooner.

"My dear Gerald, what a delightful surprise you have given us," she exclaimed. "I put on my hat the instant the rector had said grace. I left him to eat his dessert alone—a thing that has not happened since we were married—and walked over to bid you welcome. How well you are looking; how very brown you have grown! I am so glad to see you."

"It was very good of you to come over on purpose, Mrs. Ferrers."

"May I not be Aunt Rhoda instead of Mrs. Ferrers? I should like it ever so much better. Next year I shall be really your aunt, you know."

"And the rector will be your uncle," said Daphne pertly. "He is mine already, and he is ever so much kinder than when I was only his parishioner."

Mrs. Ferrers shot a piercing look, half angry, half interrogative, at her younger niece. The rector had showed a reprehensible tendency to praise the girl's beauty,

had on one occasion gone so far as to offer her a patriarchal kiss, from which Daphne had recoiled involuntarily, saying afterwards to her sister that "one must draw the line somewhere."

"Vernon has gone to bed," said Aunt Rhoda; "he felt thoroughly wearied out after the gathering at Holmsley, which seems from his account to have been a very dull business. I am glad the rector and I declined. A cold luncheon is positive death to him."

"Then we needn't go indoors yet awhile," said Gerald. "It is lovely out here. Shall I fetch a wrap for you, Lina?"

Mrs. Ferrers was carefully draped in her China-cape shawl, one of Madoline's wedding gifts to her aunt, and costly enough for a royal present.

"Thanks. There is a shawl on a sofa in the drawing-room."

"Let Daphne fetch it," interjected Mrs. Ferrers; and her niece flew to obey, while the other three sauntered slowly along the broad terrace in front of the windows.

There were some light iron chairs and a table at one end of the walk, and here they seated themselves to enjoy the summer night.

"As our English summer is a matter of about five weeks, broken by a good deal of storm and rain, we ought to make the most of it," remarked Gerald. "I hope we shall have a fine day for the Abbey to-morrow."

"You are going to take Lina to the Abbey?"

"Yes, for a regular business-like inspection; that we may see what will have to be improved, or altered, or added, or done away with before next year."

"How interesting! I should like so much to drive over with you. My experience in housekeeping matters might possibly be of use."

"Invaluable, no doubt," answered Gerald, with his easy-going, half listless air; "but we must postpone that advantage until the next time. We are going in Daphne's boat, which will only comfortably hold three," said Gerald, with a calm contempt for actual truth which horrified Madoline, who was rigidly truthful even in the most trivial things.

"Going in Daphne's boat! What an absurd idea!"

"Don't say that, Aunt Rhoda, for it's my idea," remonstrated Gerald.

"But I can't help saying it. When you have half-a-dozen carriages at your disposal, and when the drive to Goring is absolutely lovely, to go in a horrid little boat."

"It is a very nice boat, Aunt Rhoda, and Daphne manages it capitally," said Lina.

"I think it will be a delightful, dreamy way of going," said Gerald. "We shall take our time about it. There is no reason we should hurry. I shall order a carriage to meet us at the bottom of Goring Lane, where we shall land. If we prefer to drive home, we can do so."

"My dear Gerald, you and Madoline are the best judges of what is agreeable to yourselves, but I cannot help thinking that you are encouraging Daphne in a most unbecoming pursuit."

The appearance of Daphne herself with the shawl put a stop to the argument. She folded the soft woollen wrap round her sister, and then stooped to kiss her.

"Good-night, Lina," she said.

"Going to bed so early, Daphne? I hope you are not ill."

"Only a little tired after my rambles. Good-night, Aunt Rhoda; good-night, Mr. Goring," and Daphne ran away.

"Aunt Rhoda might drive over and meet us at Goring, Gerald," suggested Madoline, who always thought of other people's pleasure, and did not wish her aunt to fancy herself ignored.

"Certainly. I shall be charmed, if you think it worth your while," said Gerald.

"Then I shall certainly come. My ponies want exercise, and to-morrow is one of the rector's parochial days, so he won't miss me for an hour or two. What time do you contemplate arriving at the Abbey?"

"Oh, I suppose between one and two, the orthodox luncheon-hour," answered Gerald.

Daphne was up and dressed before five o'clock next morning. She had set her little American alarm-clock for five; but that had been a needless precaution, since she had not slept above a quarter of an hour at a time all through the short summer night. She had seen the last glimmer of the fading moon, the first faint glow of sunlight flickering on her wall. She stole softly downstairs, unlocked doors and drew bolts with the silent dexterity of a professional housebreaker, feeling almost as guilty as if she had been one; and in the cool quiet morning, while all the world beside herself seemed asleep, she ran lightly across the dewy lawn, down to the iron bridge by which she had stood with Madoline and Gerald last night. Then she crossed the meadow,

wading ankle-deep in wet grass, and scaring the placid kine, and thus to the boat-house.

She went in and got into her boat, which was drawn up under cover, and carefully protected by linen clothing. She whisked the covering off, and seated herself on the floor of the boat in front of the place of honour, above which appeared the name of the craft in gilded letters on the polished pine—"Nero."

She took out her pen-knife and began carefully, laboriously, to scrape away the gilt lettering. The thing had been so conscientiously done, the letters were so sunk and branded into the wood, that the task seemed endless; she was still digging and scraping at the first letter when Arden church clock struck six, every stroke floating clear and sweet across the river.

"What—an—utter—idiot I was," she said to herself, in an exasperated tone, emphasising each word with a savage dig of her knife into the gilded wood. "And how shall I ever get all these letters out before breakfast time?"

"Why attempt it?" asked a low pleasant voice close at hand, and Daphne, becoming suddenly aware of the odour of tobacco mixed with the perfumes of a summer meadow, looked up and saw Gerald Goring lounging against the door-post.

"Why erase the name?" he asked. "It is a very good name—classical, historical, and not altogether inappropriate. Nero was a boat-builder himself, you know."

"Was he?" said Daphne, sitting limply in the bottom of her boat, completely unnerved.

"Yes; the vessel he built was a failure, or at any rate the result of his experiment was unsatisfactory, but the intention was original and deserves praise. I am sorry you have spoilt the first letter of his name."

"Don't distress yourself," exclaimed Daphne, jumping up and stepping briskly out of her boat. "I am going to change the name of my boat, and I thought I could do it this morning as a surprise for Lina; but it was a more difficult business than I supposed. And now I must run home as fast as I can, and make myself tidy for breakfast. My father is the essence of punctuality."

"But as half-past eight is his breakfast hour you need not be in a desperate hurry. It has only just struck six. Will you come for a stroll?"

"No, thank you. I have ever so much to do before breakfast."

"Czerny's studies of velocity?"

"No."

"French grammar?"

"No."

"Be sure you are ready to start directly after breakfast."

Daphne scampered off through the wet grass, leaving Mr. Goring standing by the boat-house door, looking down with an amused smile at the mutilated name.

A TRAVELLER'S TALES.

A GUN-RACK.

IN the glazed porch of my dwelling, nearly hid at summer time by flowers and climbing plants, this trophy hangs. In younger days, when I kept and eke employed a little arsenal of fire-arms, they rested on a very curious frame. My guns and rifles now are carried by more active hands, saving an old Snider carbine, rusted and jammed in the breech, but loaded I know. It is the merest detail, quite unimportant for our legend; but I will rise from my desk and see what dusty rubbish now fills the place of those nobler instruments. Imprimis, an almond-stick cut in the garden of the Arx at Candahar. A thorn-stick from the Khoord Khyber; how that brawny old Pathan gashed his legs in winning it, and how coolly he staunched the rushing blood with earth! A hunting-crop with metal head, strangely dented and misshapen, I do not remember how. Two fly-rods. The skull and beak of a rhinosceros hornbill. An Egyptian pipe-stem of cherry-wood. A riding-whip, mended with a silver plate and a bit of wire by the blacksmith of San José de Costa Rica. A walking-stick of iron-wood, heavy as a metal bar, which once formed half of a Bornean spear-shaft; I lost the other half, an older favourite, at Sistof on the Danube, in the late war. But this has travelled with me, by steamer five thousand miles, on horseback one thousand five hundred.

There are very curious and pretty horns which compose my gun-rack. Once on a time, in guilelessness of heart, I committed myself to certain definitions in zoology, a science I have studied rather with my eyes than with my brain. They were wrong, no doubt, for all the flaccid pack of bone-collectors set upon and mouthed me in their toothless jaws. I left them at it, starting for another course of practical experience. But the incident warns me to be careful in descriptions of technical sort. We used to

think in Borneo that the kijong is an antelope, but probably enough we were mistaken. Whatever its class, it is a pretty little beast, chestnut coloured, standing about two feet high, and very good to eat. One half the surface of its horns is clothed with skin and hair; a spreading rim marks the point whence springs the true antler. Over the forehead, a little branch curls inward. The tips bend to meet each other, with a slight inclination backwards. Five pairs on either side form the rack; at top and bottom of the frame are horns very similar at first glance, but seen to be radically different on examination. No curling rim sets off the root of the antler, which rises straight, diverging outward. There is no sign of a branch, and the width of the forehead is greater. For sixteen years, more or less, I have been intending to submit these two pairs of horns to scientific scrutiny; for I have reason to believe they represent a species unknown.

To the best of my recollection, the kijongs were all shot or speared in the nets. It is wondrous luck to catch these little creatures in the open. Hardly can the European eye perceive the small deer of Borneo, when it browses at sunset amongst the low close brushwood of the slopes. Its antler-tips alone are visible above the stalks and branches, betraying it to the keen-sighted Dyak by their motion. If the least wind be stirring, your best glass will scarcely serve you. The guide trembles with impatience as he directs your gaze; for the sun is going down, mists are rising in the valley where you crouch, blue shadows swiftly mount to quench the lurid glow still burning up above. His eyes sparkle as he whispers, in a breath scarce audible at three feet distance. His ornaments softly tinkle with the quiver of his body, like that of a greyhound in the leash. When after a patient search your dull eye sees as it were a twig that moves amongst that sheeny, glossy tangle, when the Dyak marks the steadying of your glance, he rises suddenly, his head and neck above the foliage. That is the moment. If your sight is strained upon the proper place, you will see for one short second a small graceful head upraised, large ears pricked forward, dark eyes fixed upon you. Upon your conduct at this crisis will depend your supper.

But the kijong is too small to show the slightest sign above the brushwood, and too wary to be often caught at salt pans or

drinking places. In fact, I do not remember to have heard any sportsman boast of having shot one fairly—in the open, that is. He differs from the exquisite p'landok, the mouse-deer, in being wholly a jungle animal. P'landok are fond of grass, and with the extremest caution the lovely little creatures may be stalked. I have somewhere the skull of one shot just outside my garden fence at Sibi; the smallest of toy-terriers has a bigger head.

One day, whilst I was dressing skins of birds or snakes or what not, an old Kennowit chief sat watching me. "What a fool the lord is!" he observed to my interpreter.

I have come to think that this opinion of my character mildly expressed the views of long-suffering Ali, but he was hugely indignant. "This Kennowit man say you fool, sir," he exclaimed. "What he mean, the ignorant heathen?"

"Ask him!" I replied; and it was done with emphasis. The worthy savage explained that no one right in his head would abandon the luxuries of Belati, to pick up feathers and rubbish on the other side the world. "For," said he, with the frankness of his uncouth people, "he does not collect things worth having. There are charms amongst us Kennowits, as everybody knows, really useful; but when my brother offered him for sale the wondrous stone discovered in a snake's belly, he would not have it. Look at those horns he is taking to Belati: common kijong's, and rusa's, pig's tusks, and snake's teeth. I possess the horn of a p'landok! Its fellow was brass, and I melted it to make this siri-box. That is a real charm. What will he give?"

"Show it me!" I said, not without interest, when the chief's words had been duly translated. The p'landok is alleged to have no horns, and I never saw an example to the contrary; but a belief prevails, wherever this animal is found, that very rare individuals have some kind of excrescence on the forehead. When the Kennowit produced his specimen, however, it was evidently no more than a kijong horn, malformed and stunted. There were other things in the tambok which contained it, a basket of split rattans, prettily dyed and plaited. Turning it over, I examined the chief's stock of fetishes. They were the silliest rubbish possible, tusks and bones and teeth, bits of wood curiously twisted, knots of hair and pebbles. "Why," I said to Ali, "this Kennowit

man himself lays store by kijong horns!" holding up the proof. My interpreter laughed roughly, triumphing over the Kafir, and all the savages assembled made merry at their lord's expense. But he cried: "That a kijong! It is the charm on which our village depends for its prosperity. No kijong ever had horns like those! They came off the head of an antu." Then he pointed out the differences which I have mentioned, apparent enough when brought to notice. His people listened with awe.

"Tell him I will give a quarter-dollar for the thing!" I said to Ali, taking my gun for the evening's stroll. The Kennowit scorned to answer, and I went my way. Later at night, when we had reassembled round the fires, I heard the following story. It needs all the evidence forthcoming to persuade me sometimes that I am the same living man who blithely underwent the experiences of my youth. Scenes vastly more impressive than any I recall from Borneo have passed before my eyes since then. No doubt of their reality disturbs me, but I could almost fancy, now and again, that my long sojourn in the far East was a dream.

We sat in the covered verandah of the house, perched forty feet above the ground. Fires blazed from space to space down the shadowy vista, for each household has its own. Men squatted on the mats around them, impatient for the suppers which their busy women were preparing inside their chambers. They were naked, saving the breech-clout, the head-handkerchief, the armlets of white shell, and the long coils of brazen wire on their wrists; but the close and minute tattooing on their bodies gave the appearance of a dark blue vest. This habit distinguishes the Kayans and Kennowits from the Dyaks, a race superior in all respects. They gossiped merrily of the day's events, and jested with the girls who moved among them, not too full of household cares for a shrewd exchange of banter. Their eyes, small, prominent, and inky-black, shone in the firelight, and their bracelets glittered. Weapons hung on the posts, ready to each man's hand: spears, swords; shields, blow-pipes. The chief's hearth was largest, and here the elders gravely sat to gather wisdom of the stranger and to impart it. The lobes of their aged ears were so distended that they fell upon the shoulder as a loop of twine falls; one could thrust one's closed hand through the least of them. Overhead were suspended

the trophies of their own and their forefathers' prowess, in the form of twenty or thirty skulls, smoke-dried, grinning, distorted from all human shape. Here were my quarters. The fire glowed all night, for the comfort of the old men, and of those relieved by public admiration from toiling in the fields, who never seemed to sleep. I left them droning their old tales and chewing betel; I woke at any hour, and heard the same slow clack of tongues, the same splash of copious expectoration, the same rustling of the siri-box pushed from hand to hand along the mats. Outside, beyond the eaves, the deep blue night slept tranquilly, the cigales whirled in the black trees, the fronds of the penang drooped like plumes against the lucent sky. And I gave myself to sleep again with awful content and happiness.

Thus the Kennowit told the legend of his charm: "One day," he said, "after the rice-harvest, I went to seek gutta-percha in the woods. It is long ago; I was a young man, poor and unconsidered. We Kennowits lived much further up the stream then, for the English rajah had not yet established peace, and, betwixt the Kayans and the Dyaks, we led the life of hunted deer. Even in holiday time our warriors did not dare go out, as the custom is, to seek jungle produce. They were brave, they feared no enemy, they had many heads in the pangah. But the women and children were not safe from hour to hour. As for me, I was a single man, in want of a wife; so I took provisions and set out. Gutta-trees were common there as bamboos. But on this occasion—it was the strangest thing!—I could not find a tree. When I climbed a tapong, to overlook the forest, there they stood in dozens; but all vanished at my approach. Some necromancer had bewitched me. I could pick up gutta-leaves quite fresh, torn off by the monkeys or parrots; but there was no tree overhead. And yet all this while my *angei* (omen-bird) flew constantly before me on the right hand, uttering three cries. The grasshoppers were equally propitious. They never sang together, but one at a time, always on the right. I dreamt also of a wife and children, which, as you know, is a sign of extraordinary luck; but still the gutta-trees disappeared before me. So it went on for a week. With such encouragement no one but a fool would have returned, but when I found myself above the rapids, two days' march in the Kayan country, I was frightened.

"It was borne in upon me that an antu dogged my track. I made the figure of an alligator in mud, and stuck it full of bamboo spikes. My bird called 'Trik, trik' all the while I was shaping the image, and I knew that it was pleased. At evening time I got into a tree and waited. Something passed softly underneath, stood an instant, breathing in pain, then dashed through the bushwood. Next day I cut half-a-dozen stout bamboos, and sharpened them so keen that they would pierce a plank of iron-wood. With these I made traps, and set them round about the place. I dared not watch again, but lay far off in the woods, trembling. About midnight the forest suddenly echoed with bellowings and screams. Lightning played round me. The trees clashed their branches. In that blue glare I saw fearful shapes which rushed yelling by me. The marrow withered in my bones, and I turned face downwards to the earth. A hurricane swept through the forest, and lifted me, but I clung fast to roots and bushes. Then the rain suddenly swelled, and came upon me in a flood; but I struggled against it, and kept my ground. At length, with a last long shriek, the tumult stilled. The antu was dead!"

The effect of this story on a superstitious and imaginative audience was striking. Men, women, and children had drawn close to hear. Their wild eyes burned with excitement, and they pressed one on another till the perspiration gleamed on their naked shoulders. At this moment, in the bush outside, a shrill cry rang out, that of a wild cat springing on its victim. The women screamed, the men struggled towards their arms, and all the serried mass rolled on the floor. I laughed heartily, so did my Malays, so did the Kennowits when they recovered from the scare. But the girls ran away, and were seen no more that night.

"You looked for the antu in the morning?" I asked of the chieftain. "What did you find?"

"An awful thing! Its head was like a panther's, with fangs of steel; its body like that of a horse, and its tail a snake; that was still alive, and hissed at me. When I struck at it with my parang it broke away from the body and glided off."

"And on the creature's head were those horns?"

"Yes. I brought them home, and everything has prospered with me since. Whilst I cut off the antu's head my omen-bird

called behind me for the first time. Of course I returned, and everywhere on that same trail, which had not a gutta-tree when I advanced, they grew in clumps. More than that, I found gold, and groves of sago, and I know not what. It employed me weeks to bring my produce to the river, but in all that time no Kayan ever appeared. I became the richest man in our village, and when we moved, after the English rajah's coming, the people chose me for their tuah."

What is one to say of this story? That the old man believed it I could scarcely doubt. Many repetitions had increased its marvel, and had furnished the antu with some attributes which Cuvier would have ridiculed, but a foundation of truth seemed to be discernible. I asked if there were wild cattle in that country, and panthers; the chief said that both were common, of a large breed. Thus the bellowing and screams might be accounted for, and a sudden storm would easily produce the other effects upon a man distracted by superstitious fears. The snake's tail, which hissed and escaped, needs no explaining; it gives, indeed, a confirmation to my belief that the tale was substantially true, for all the exaggerations and absurdities which time and fancy had attached to it.

"What will you take for the horns?" I said.

"Nothing on earth would buy them! They hold the prosperity of my village." But I obtained the curiosities at last for a handful of quinine, two bottles of schnaps, and three empty soda-water bottles—these last a special treasure in the far East.

The pair of similar horns which decorate the bottom of my gun-rack, came to my hands with a story much less romantic. I accompanied the present Rajah Brooke, then Tuan Mudah, on a trip through the outlying districts of this same province. One evening we were invited to a feast, and left the vessel en grande tenue, after an early dinner. Our boat was overladen, I recollect, and it gained the shore but just in time, filling as the last of us sprang out. A mighty uncomfortable adventure it would have been for me, had we sunk in the rapid current of the Batang Lupar. Malays are water-dogs, and to them the ducking would have been a joke. Nor had the officers occasion for alarm, since their boatmen and servants would have carried them ashore without exertion on their part. But a stranger had no claim to such service, and with an unpleasant smile I picture myself drifting

down the misty river, hundreds of yards in width, escorted by sharks and alligators on a stream running like a mill-sludge. However, that chance of death was escaped, as had been so many before, and so very many since. We leapt ashore, and climbed a lofty pole which sloped upwards to the verandah of our hosts. It had notches on either side, foothold enough for a race almost as prehensile with their toes as monkeys. The most of us Europeans were accustomed to go barefoot. May it be whispered that his highness himself kicked off his shoes, and swarmed the pole as easily as a bear? He will not be offended at the revelation, for if the wise man does at Rome as the Romans do, much more in Borneo should we take lessons from the Dyaks.

Upon the outside verandah we were met by a deputation of high chiefs, wearing their ornaments of gold, and clad in silk. The "house"—Dyak or Kennowit or Kayan—is, in fact, the village, no matter how many souls are reckoned therein. It is divided longitudinally into three parts: the range of sleeping chambers, one to each family; the inner verandah, sheltered by the roof, on which these chambers open; and the outer verandah, beyond the eave. This last is devoted to such operations as are objectionable indoors—washing children, cleaning rice, and so on. There is but one floor, of course, which is raised ten to fifty feet above the ground on massive posts. As the population grows, the house is "produced," to use a mathematical term; buildings of a thousand feet in length are not at all uncommon. Festivities take place in the covered verandah, where nothing but the beams, and fire-places easily removed, obstruct any demonstration of uproarious spirit. A great occasion it is when the rajah is invited. The chiefs greeted us warmly but respectfully, and led us to a place of honour. But one chair had been sent ashore, which his highness occupied; the others squatted cross-legged on the mats, nursing our swords, those who had them. The entertainment was of the usual class, but grander. Warriors danced before us with singular agility, and a display of pantomime quite astonishing. I do not remember, at this moment, any exception to the rule that the power of mimicry is possessed in its highest degree by the races of mankind lowest in civilisation. No actor in my experience—which is wide—can equal the half-human Bushmen in this respect. I draw no conclusion from this fact, but it merits notice. The Kennowits

are certainly least advanced of those Bornean races which have formed a community—unless, perhaps, the Kayans are inferior. There are, in the East, wood-dwelling representatives of the Bushmen just mentioned, but little is known of them. Such are Ujits, Pakatans, and others, who, if the theory be correct which I confidently put forward, should be the best pantomimists of all. But the Kennowits are certainly more skilful in this art than their neighbours of a higher grade, the Dyaks, who again excel the Malays—Malay humour, indeed, does not so express itself, if I may trust my memory.

A bear-dance was performed for us, a mias-dance, a head-hunting dance, and others, with shrewd appreciation of character and great variety of incident. Then the warriors engaged in mimic fight, and two famous actors represented a jungle tragedy. After stalking each other a long time, as head-hunters do, they met and fought with sword and shield. Presently one of them fell, and the other clutched him by the hair in triumph with many gesticulations. Upon the very point of severing the upturned neck, he recognised his brother. The women gave effect to this discovery by uttering a horror-stricken howl; but the victor's expression, gestures, attitudes, were so full of dramatic spirit that I followed the story without need of explanation.

Then, after all the chiefs had danced, and such of the warriors as had a claim to that distinction, the women stood forward. Half-a-dozen hideous old wretches in jacket and blue and tartan petticoat stood one behind the other, and swayed their arms about, with undulations of the hips. They were entitled to respect both for age and rank, but much liquor had been consumed, and the younger men were impatient. They shouted and jeered at those venerable matrons, whilst the girls laughed mockingly. In vain did the chiefs, very drunk, try to quell the uproar. But the dames were not going to be put down by their grandchildren, and they continued the performance, querulously squabbling with one another about figures and "time." The Tuan Mudah himself it was who put a sudden stop to the entertainment. Lit with smoky torches, crammed with naked humanity, the verandah had become insufferable, and we all longed for the cool quarters on board the *Venus*. With a significant smile at me his highness asked: "Are there no young women in your village, Orang Kaya? Or can they not dance?" The

unruly throng shouted with delight, whilst the wretched harridans collapsed. One burst into tears of spite as she pushed the girls aside—pinching them, I'm certain—and escaped. We took the opportunity to go, escorted as far as the edge of the verandah by the most sober of our hosts. Even these could not walk singly, and we should have been smothered under their warm but ill-judged adieus had not the Malays protected us with outstretched rifles. While we smoked a last cheroot on deck the fun ashore grew louder and louder. Several times in the night I woke, disturbed by a wilder burst of song and merriment. The great house seemed to hang in air, ablaze with ruddy light, which streamed beneath the open eave, and rolled in smoky volumes through the apertures of the roof. Dusky figures staggered out, to cool and sleep away their drink in the verandah. The black river was seamed with scarlet threads, reflections of the pandemonium up above. One great shaft of glare crossed the water like a lurid bridge, and faintly outlined the dim trees upon the other bank. The festivities continued day and night, with a loss of several lives by accident or alcoholic apoplexy. When food and drink were all expended, the warriors staggered home, supported by their female-kind, half dead. It is not necessary to compassionate these. They create the mischief, and take pride in their success. I have watched a pretty girl befool a man to drink, with just such ridicule and coaxing as her English sister would employ to gain an end. I have seen her scream with triumphant malice when the poor fellow rolled helpless at her feet, and call her friends to laugh at him. I hoped that she would have to carry that stalwart victim on her shoulders, when the fun was over.

But about the horns. They were tied upon a post just by my seat, with many a tusk and antler, used as clothes-pegs, or hooks to hang weapons upon. When I expressed a wish to have them, a chief cut the lashings and presented me with a miscellaneous armful.

CEMENTED

AYE, wet the shattered edges daintily,
Place them together in the ancient shape,
Match hue and fair design with careful eye,
And let no fragment from your search escape;
So, place the cup where no keen sunlights glance;
Pshaw, does such injured beauty pay your pain?
'Twill hold a mimic waxen bud, perchance,
But never water for a rose again

Unsay the angry words; the charge recall;
 Deny or plead away doubt, slight, or sneer;
 Before the outraged shrine for pardon fall,
 Win back the smile with the forgiving tear;
 The happy "safety of affection" lost,
 Trust and its frank free gladness fled together,
 What boots to feign the faith, to count the cost?
 The wounded love will bear the scar for ever.

Ah, keep the precious porcelain in its niche,
 Guard close the fragile darlings of the heart,
 Oh, ye, in life's pure treasures proud and rich;
 The fruit and its first bloom are light to part;
 Dread one rough touch; no time again can give,
 Once gone, or perfect form or fearless faith;
 In prayer and patience mourn it while ye live,
 And hope to win it back in heaven through death.

MY LITTLE TOUR IN WALES.

PART VI.

IF that nice little place on the Riviera where all the consumptive people go, you know, be really as like Barmouth as Lady Tattenham declares it to be, then the nice little place on the Riviera—which after some comparing of notes we conclude to be Mentone—must be a very nice little place indeed. Whether it really has a foreign air or not I can't say. But the air it has is certainly not English, though perhaps, the place not being English, that is not quite so striking a fact as at first sight it may appear to be.

The station is somewhat novel in its arrangements, laying itself out for the reception of casual visitors, in preference to the regular inhabitants of the place, with a frankness I do not remember to have noted in any English watering-place. Cabs or flys there are none. But about half the platform is open to the road, and above the outer edge thereof hangs a neat little row of signboards, each setting forth the fixed station of some special hotel omnibus which is backed up under it, at an artful distance below the platform level, so that its passengers have nothing to do but walk straight in without even the trouble of a step. Those who have already secured for themselves private lodgings may avail themselves, for the transport of their luggage, of the services of the town porter, a quite novel functionary in my experience, who has a little board and a little station to himself at the end of the platform, with a smart little cart and a smart little pony all complete. Sometimes, I observe, the pony is exchanged for a donkey, who is a character in his way and on playfully chaffing terms with every porter and hanger-on about the place.

And the same air of laying itself out for visitors pervades the whole of the little town. More than half the shops have

"for the season only" as plainly marked upon their picturesque fronts as though a placard to that effect hung over their tempting windows. From the station, indeed, to the principal hotel—which for fear, I suppose, of being overrun with custom has endowed itself with the euphonious and easily-to-be-remembered title of the "Cors y Gedol"—there is nothing that a Londoner would call a "shop" at all. But there is a delicious little row of wooden booths, as perfect a Vanity Fair of fruit, and fish, and flowers, and vegetables, and Welsh diamonds, and toys, and knickknacks, and agate boxes, and half a hundred other useful and useless things, as John Bunyan himself could ever have imagined.

A wonderfully gay look these bright little booths give to the place, and its gaiety is not diminished by the wealth of flowers and shrubs which, in spite of the stormy winter weather, evidently manage to flourish somehow all the year through. Such fuchsias and such myrtle I have never seen in the open air except in Devonshire, and there is no feeling of the heavy South Devon air in the sparkling breeze that comes rustling in from the wide blue sea. And up and down the gay little street the little summer colony saunters idly; not in gorgeous watering-place array, but in good homely holland or serviceable serge, while the children come pattering up from the broad sands, just the other side of the bit of green that fronts the hotel, with bare little pink toes and sunburnt calves still glistening with brine.

I wonder whether it is a Welsh custom to do altogether without lights in their theatres, or whether that is a luxury peculiar to Barmouth. I remember Adolphus's uncle Augustus telling us how, when he was attached to the Legation at Copenhagen, the great central chandelier of the Royal theatre used to be wound up into the ceiling at the beginning of every act, so that when the curtain was up there was no light except that upon the stage. But Barmouth goes a step ahead even of this. It is not exactly arranged after the ordinary pattern of theatres in any respect, being simply a huge bare room at the top of a long narrow staircase which forms the sole means of ingress to all the three different classes—two shilling stalls, one shilling pit, and sixpenny "gallery"—into which its accommodation is divided, and which all three, gallery and all, are simply so many long rows of chairs or benches with an imaginary, or let us say a con-

ventional, boundary line between the different sets. After all, there must be a good deal of honesty about the world still. For the entrance is at the stage end—serving, indeed, as I imagine, for stage door as well—and of course everyone who enters finds himself straightway in the two shilling stalls. Why, except for a pure innate love of justice, he should take the trouble to hunt in the dark, and without the smallest chance of his self-abnegation being even realised by the checktaker on the stairs outside, for the humbler bench at the back to which his sixpence has honestly entitled him, it is difficult to say. But they all religiously “sort themselves,” and a solemn hush settles down, broken only by an occasional giggle or a whispered “Ha’ done now” from the dim recesses of the sixpenny seats.

Then the fiddle begins to tune itself, and does so with a vigour and persistency which must, I am afraid, have altogether exhausted the energies of the performer. For when presently the piano breaks out into what may be called a general operatic selection, consisting apparently of as much of the more popular works of Offenbach, Hervé, Arthur Sullivan, and others, as the pianist can at the moment call to mind, the stringed portion of the orchestra after a couple of wild and wholly irrelevant chords retires altogether from the contest, or only strikes in now and then with a stray note or two from the last bar but one. It is rather hard upon the pianist, who has evidently calculated upon his coadjutor to help him over the tender places where the dumb notes of his own instrument come in—or rather do not come in—or his own memory or execution fall a little shorter than usual of the mark. So at least I judge from the “recitativo accompanied” of unmistakably “Saxon” English of which a stray objurgation or two every now and then find its way to us through the unstopped gaps.

Even an *ad libitum* overture must come to an end some time. The pianist’s reminiscences have been exhausted long since, and through the maze of inchoate chords and insequent roulades under which, with the loud pedal hard down, he is striving nobly to conceal his frenzied search after at least one more fragment of one more tune, I fancy I begin to hear imminent threatenings of the Old Hundredth. But the stage-manager is no doubt aware that even a pianist will turn if he be kept hammering too late, and the apparition between curtain and

proscenium of a stubby hand and a broad face, from the latter of which proceeds a very audible shout of “That’ll do,” puts an end at least to this part of our punishment, and gets the curtain up triumphantly upon the “glorious comedy” of *The Rising Generation*. Compared with the original performance of the “glorious comedy” in London, the present representation has one great advantage. It may not be more natural, and I am afraid it is certainly not more artistic. But it is incomparably more funny. The ‘aughty English baronet is wonderfully flavoured by the addition of a well-developed brogue, whilst an entire innocence of teeth or aspirates gives a special piquancy to the aristocratic attractions of his refined and well-preserved sister. Except for the facial advantage of a huge natural moustache the worthy butlerman has not quite such opportunities. But he makes the most of those he has, as, being a manager, he has the right and the opportunity to do. Indeed, it is in the cares and responsibilities of management that his great opportunity lies, and the artful way in which the dialogue of the piece is interlarded with injunctions to “Lower out that cloth,” “Push that wing further on,” “Look out for that curtain,” and, above all, “Stop that row,” is as delightful as it is at times bewildering. Oddly enough the only part that has not been thus improved is the part of the young gentleman, who really is as much like a young gentleman as his author will in any wise suffer him to be. Whether the thing be any the odder for the fact that this young gentleman is a young lady, and that she has undertaken the part at a moment’s notice to fill the place of the suddenly vanished “walking gentleman” of the company, I leave for more experienced critics to determine. Not being a critic, I am happy to say, I simply enjoy this young lady’s capital performance very much, and am not half so greatly relieved as I expected to be when by-and-by the curtain wobbles down for the last time, and a vigorous “Tum tum tum tu-rm-t’m-tum,” in which both piano and fiddle unite, announces that the evening’s entertainment has come to an end.

There is one person in the theatre, however, who is even less gratified by the loyal strains than I am. And that is the manager. We have hardly got to “our gra-a-cious Que—” when the side of the curtain is pulled vehemently back, and a spectral fist makes its appearance, shaking itself with mute but effective eloquence in the direction of the

for once too unanimous orchestra. The loyal strains cease as suddenly as though a republic had been proclaimed. But the exodus it has inspired continues, and the theatre is already more than half emptied by the time the manager himself rushes bodily on, to announce that, in their laudable anxiety to reach the point at which they really could co-operate, piano and violin have been premature in their loyalty. The performances are not over; will only terminate as announced with a song from Miss Kate So-and-so, who therewith, without waiting for any niceties of toilette, reappears before the dozen or two of easy-going people who have not yet made good their retreat, and in a fine soprano voice, and the garb of the young gentleman hero of the comedy, sings for their special and exclusive benefit the good old ditty of the Jolly Young Waterman. The effect is, perhaps, as Edward Emilius says, just a trifle mixed, and would certainly have been better could the piano—the violin again discreetly silent—have succeeded in keeping, say, within a bar or so of the singer. But we are not disposed to be hypercritical, and the end of the performance has really come at last, and the united efforts of piano and violin soon clear the theatre of its last lingering occupants.

Personally speaking, I could find it in my heart to linger in this quiet little out-of-the-way watering-place, with its pleasant contrast to the holiday cockneyhood of our southern sea-suburbs, for the rest of our trip. The long range of Penmaen Pool alone, with its picturesque northern shore studded with snug little country villas like another Como, and its fine northern outlook over Cader Idris and his companions, would furnish outings in endless variety for a week at least. Then within easy reach to the north lie Pwlheli, and Maentwrog, and Ffestiniog, with its funny little toy railway, of which Edward Emilius in his professional enthusiasm gives an account which makes me almost long to buy it bodily, and take it home for Woffles to play with, and Tan-y-Bwlch, and Beddgellert, and the great Snowdon himself.

For the present, however, we are bound for Aberystwith, whither the Tattenhams, indeed, have proceeded direct, and where, as this evening's post duly informs us, they have already succeeded in finding us capital lodgings at a very reasonable rent. So Snowdon must be left till we are fairly on our way home, and if we can't manage it then we must come again when we can.

So early next morning we set out, and let me strongly recommend any one who is about to make the same journey to set out early in the morning too. In the first place it is delightfully cool. But that is a minor matter, for while our London letters all groan of sweltering sun and sultry stifling atmosphere, we out here in the fresh mountain breeze have been gently browning like deftly manipulated toast without once feeling even unpleasantly warm. As the sea-fog comes drifting in to meet us on our way stationwards at half-past seven o'clock this August morning, we are quite content to step sturdily out to warm ourselves.

But if the sea-fog were ever so much cooler and ever so much thicker, I at least forgive it for its work's sake. Barmouth itself it wraps in an impenetrable veil, and as we rattle out upon the long spidery pier that spans the mouth of Penmaen Pool, we seem to be up in cloudland altogether. Just for a moment it lifts as we round the point by Llangelynin, and the quaint little place gives us a parting smile as a sort of "au revoir." Then it shuts in behind us more closely than ever, and a rift opens on our left hand giving a brief glimpse of long rolling hills over which the fleecy mist sweeps in great soft white masses, bringing out every little swell and fall, as one by one they open and sink again from view with a clearness and picturesque effect not to be approached under full-sun glare.

Then the whole mist thins, and the yellow sunshine fills it with a golden glow, and the glimpses of fairyland through the more and more frequent rifts are all brilliant with the glory of the morning. And by-and-by a glittering sun-path begins to glimmer on us from the sea. Then brightens rapidly, as the great grey veil lifts with one final sweep, and rolls away up the long mountain slopes, its rearguard all white and glistening like the christening robes of the young day; then melts and breaks, and hangs awhile in single fleecy masses on here and there a loftier mountain-top; then finally melts and vanishes, and the whole gay landscape is basking once more under an Italian sky, but brightened and freshened by the rustling breeze that comes leaping, not from sultry African deserts or arid Russian steppes, but clear away from the broad Atlantic.

Then we turn inland again, and, rumbling heavily through the narrow rocky cuttings of quaint old Aberdovey, follow for half-a-dozen miles or so the northern coast of another picturesque estuary almost

the ditto of Penmaen Pool, and join company at Glandovey Junction with the other little train which for the last half-hour has been racing us neck and neck along the opposite shore. Then after some ten or a dozen minutes of what, to the uninstructed eye, appears to be something like inextricable confusion, find ourselves at last all deftly sorted into the Aberystwith train, and the Barmouth train, and the London express, and the direct Manchester, and the branch train to Dinas Mawddwy, and Heaven and the indefatigable station-master alone know how many more, and are once more buzzing merrily along upon our road.

And now, except for passing through the very smallest railway-station—Ynys Las I think it is—with the smallest station-master and the smallest porter in the smallest suit of corduroys I ever saw, and with a passenger contingent to match in the shape of one very small boy with a microscopic parcel under his arm, I do not know that there is anything of very special note till we reach the long platform of Aberystwith, with its curious vista of ancient Gothic arches in very modern railway iron, and the same sensible foreign arrangement of hotel omnibuses and town porter's cart as at Barmouth. Here, indeed, we have an additional refinement in this direction in the shape of "Mr. Atkins's fly." Who Mr. Atkins is, and why he should have a fly all to himself, or, granting that necessity, what public end is gained by the public announcement of the fact, I am not in a position to say. At the present moment Mr. Atkins is, no doubt, taking a drive, for his fly is not in attendance, and the elegant little signboard merely marks for the edification of the wondering tourist the place where it once has been.

A pleasant little place is Aberystwith, slightly suggestive on a small scale of Weymouth, but with a brisk bright look and a brisk bright atmosphere, neither of which are very specially connected in my personal memory with that pet watering-place of good old George the Third. If I remember rightly, too, there is a somewhat painful respectability about Weymouth—a sort of mute protest no doubt against any association of ideas between it and its very much other than respectable neighbour, Portland—from which Aberystwith is happily free. Not that we are anything but respectable at Aberystwith. But we do not feel called upon to express our respectability in starch and buckram. We are simple-minded folk on the whole, we Aberystwithians,

and if in our ordinary state of existence in any way complex, assume a simplicity for our seaside holiday, and on the whole assume it with considerable success. When we bathe—and the sheltered bay and smooth flat sand make the very ideal of a splashing place—our object is not the display of the last fashion in bathing toilettes, or the most artful thing out in real back hair, but just a dip in the brisk Atlantic brine. When we want an appetite, as some of us no doubt sometimes do, though I cannot say that was one of the wants which ever fell to my experience, we don't maunder up and down a dusty parade, or addle our brains by grinding round and round a melancholy circle of creaking flies and hobbling horses, but step gallantly out up the steep slopes of Constitutional Hill, or away to the back of the town, and up the still loftier sides of Pendinas. Perhaps if we have come straight from London, which however is not a very common case, for there are very few traces of Metropolis-super-Mare about the "Queen of Welsh watering-places," we find either of these a trifle beyond our unaccustomed powers, and then we content ourselves with the castle grounds, a pleasant little turfy hillock at the northern end of the parade, just beyond the gorgeous new University College of Wales, crowned with the somewhat fragmentary remains of the once famous and formidable Llanfadarn Gaerog, and commanding a pleasant little panorama, on the one side of the bay with its bright little crescent sweep of houses terminating in the abrupt mass of Constitutional Hill, on the other of the queer little old harbour, with may be a rugged old collier brig or a dapper fleet of tan-sailed fishing-boats.

I should like to have seen one of the expeditions set out, which, according to local tradition, used to issue forth from this venerable little port pretty frequently in the olden time. Not a very extensive expedition either. A solemn procession of one, that is all; or at least as solemn as any procession of one can be when that solitary processionist proceeds to sea in a clothes-basket, and without sail or oar to help him home again. That, says local tradition, was the way in which in the good old days when Norma and Adalgisa used to go about the forest cutting mistletoe with golden sickles, and singing the loveliest of ancient British duets by the Bellini of the period, aspirants to the Druidic priesthood were put finally through their facings before passing from their novitiate. If they landed safely

anywhere between Bardsey Island and St. David's Head, it was considered that they were at all events not born to be drowned, and that, so far at least, they were qualified for moonlight excursions in the forest, backing up the local Norma when ever she required the assistance of a chorus, and generally performing the functions of a full-blown Druid. If on the other hand they were full blown in the more strictly practical sense of being blown out to sea, it was philosophically concluded that "they were wanted elsewhere"—probably in Ireland.

Alas! We have no Druids nowadays, except once a year or so at the Crystal Palace. If we went about the woods at night singing Italian choruses in ball-wreaths and white dressing-gowns we should probably be taken up by the rural police, and should certainly catch colds in our heads. And as for coracles, Vathek himself, so far as I can find, might exhaust himself, his temper, and his fortune, before he got any more of them, unless he had them built on purpose.

But after all we don't want coracles to enjoy ourselves with in Aberystwith. If we are studiously disposed we cannot do better than enter ourselves at the magnificent college which now occupies a gorgeous building—or more correctly speaking, as much as has been habitably completed of a gorgeous building—in the hyper-æsthetic style of the period, originally intended for one of a little series of quiet unpretentious hotels not costing more than a hundred thousand or so apiece, and providing for the wants of passengers at the various stations of the Cambrian Railway. Fortunately for the scholastic reputation of Aberystwith the ingenious but perhaps somewhat sanguine speculator found himself, before expending more than the first eighty thousand pounds on the first half of the first hotel of the series, occupying, as Edward Emilius puts it, an unfurnished flat in Queer Street. So the handsome fragment of nineteenth-century Gothic which cost eighty thousand pounds to put up, was knocked down—metaphorically, of course—for the more modest sum of ten thousand pounds. And the inhabitants of the principality generally laid their heads together, and opened their purses, and founded therein the University College of Wales. And the commercial travellers of North Wales did the like and founded a scholarship. And the slate-quarriers of Ffestiniog followed suit, and founded another—for proficiency in cyphering, no doubt. And seven gentle-

men—mystic and significant number—seven gentlemen of the highest academical honours undertook the teaching of thirty-one different subjects, from Sanscrit, Syriac, Ethiopian, and Welsh, to agriculture, music, and political economy. And already a hundred students assemble daily for the attack of this tolerably comprehensive coracleum. And if anybody likes to go and see them do it he has only to summon up courage to sound a summons at the porticoed door of the palatial edifice—there is a bell for the purpose, so he need not invest in a special horn—the payment of sixpence will carry him over the entire building, and the sixpence he pays will go to found yet another scholarship for the special competition of enthusiastic visitors like himself.

I suggest to George that here is a glorious opportunity for turning his holiday to real practical account. I regret to say, George repels the suggestion with contumely. Mr. Edward Emilius on the other hand sends in his name for the visitors' competition forthwith on the sole condition that it should be restricted to the two subjects of Ethiopian and music, and that he should be allowed to combine his study of the two. The answer of the college authorities has not yet been received.

Meanwhile we enjoy ourselves in a less serious but on the whole I think not less satisfactory manner. There is the pleasant little round over the northern hill, home through Clarast, the Valley of Early Harvests; and there is the exhilarating scramble to Sarn Cynfelin, sea-battered no-thoroughfare to Caer Gwyddno and the other drowned cities of the vanished Lowland Hundred. And there are the Alltwen Cliffs, and the grim sea-caves where the big waves boom and roar in style quite exhilarating to those who are safe out of their reach. And there are the Pwllcarndog Falls, little visited of uninstructed tourists, but quite worth a visit if you have only a pleasant party wherewith to visit them—as indeed what visitable spot is not? And there is Tulierin's grave, for lovers of archæology; and the Tallybout, with its manufactories of "everlasting" Welsh tweeds and linseys, for the lover of the practical; and Plynlymon for the lovers of mountain air; and the great valley of Mynydd Hyddgen for the lover of history; and the Devil's Bridge for the lover of romance; and Pontrhydfendigaed, and Llanfihangel, and Llangrwydden, and Pencareggoppa, and

Yspyttylyntwym, for the lover of spelling-bees; and the whole pleasant round of mountain and coast and sea for lovers of things in general, as all wise people out for a holiday should always be.

Our little party at all events enjoys itself so well that even the thoughts of romantic Bedd-gellert and gigantic Snowdon begin to lose something of their more urgent attraction. Which is perhaps as well. For one morning Adolphus makes his appearance on our return, wet to the knees from a scrambling excursion along the rocky beach, with a long face and a yellow envelope in his hand, and we know that in his absence the whole remaining strength of the Department has not been able to restrain the affairs of the country from rushing forward at most unofficial speed, and that unless we would wish to find that something has actually been done, our holiday is at an end.

I suppose we must really be in a severe state of dumps, for even Edward Emilius is infected by it. As for getting so much as a laugh out of him all the way of that last desperate scramble to the caves, I might as well attempt that experiment on one of the great blue mussels that never open their lips till after they are dead. I positively get silent myself after a time, and there we sit like a couple of stranded oysters waiting for the tide. When I at length do jump up with the view of beating a by no means premature retreat, he actually jumps up too, catches hold of my hand, and stops me.

"I say, Maggie! May I say Maggie?" he begins.

"It seems to me," I reply demurely, "that you have said it."

Whereupon he proceeds to say more—a good deal more. And insists upon my hearing it too, in spite of the tide. Which really comes in at such a pace that, if I were to stay to argue the point, my little tour in Wales would come to a premature and moist conclusion. So there is no help for it. Edward Emilius has his way. And in reward he has the impertinence to tell me perhaps I may some day see Snowdon after all, only it won't be "my" little tour in Wales then, you know, but "ours."

OUR NATIONAL MUSIC, BRITISH AND IRISH.

NATIONAL music is a puzzle, and has been so for any number of years. What is a nation? Is it a population identical or nearly so in race or in creed, or in both?

Is it a people much isolated by natural peculiarities, cutting it off from most others? Is it the home of a community which has for centuries lived under the same form of government, and become, as it were, stereotyped in tastes, manners, and tendencies? We find all these meanings in current use, and may perhaps accept an agglomeration or amalgamation of them. Then spring up the further questions: What is it that constitutes the music of each nation, as distinguished from that of others? Is it the music only, or the music married to words? When we find that the music of one nation presents peculiarities that can be felt, whether or not we can describe them, how do we know that no other nation shares it with them? Ordinary readers can scarcely imagine the amount of controversy that has arisen on these matters; controversy in which the combatants are but little disposed to yield one to another, either in opinion or in demonstrative insistence. The late Mr. Henry F. Chorley, a musical critic of much distinction, had a great liking for this subject; he lectured on it, and wrote articles and papers on it. Since his decease, a revised edition of the essays and lectures has been lately prepared by Mr. Henry G. Hewlett.

Mr. Chorley takes a wide sweep (we speak of him in the present tense for convenience). He ranges from east to west, from north to south, touching, as he goes, on the music of all nations worth taking into account. He treats pointedly of the difficulty of applying any precise test to the veritability of national music; observation, guess, and coincidence must often be allowed to over-rule tradition. We have to take into account the uncertainty of memory. "Melodies carried over sea and land, handed down by persons having high or low or no voices, from spinning-wheel to spinning-wheel, from 'knitters in the sun to knitters in the sun,' in the days preceding the recording of the notes in manuscript." Much uncertainty also results concerning the forms of early musical instruments, often derived from sculpture and monumental drawings which require to be studied with caution.

Our own country, Great Britain and Ireland, will be quite as much as can be grappled with in this article.

Mr. Chorley, after naming many printed collections of national music, all of them valuable and interesting, observes that we here enter upon anything but a region of brotherly love as regards music: a region

of hot controversy over our rich treasures of national melody. In countries lying so closely near one to another as ours it would not be easy to separate what may have been brought by pedlars, by strollers mixing among the retainers of nobles and barons, from what has grown out of the soil, save on some principle of resemblance from observation and comparison.

Beginning with Wales, for reasons deemed by him sufficient, our author informs us that he finds in the tunes of that country remarkable grandeur and pathos, and, combined with these, a regularity of structure and of intervals which set them apart from every other group of national melodies with which he is acquainted. Few melodies of other countries have been less tinged by strange or foreign influences. The solitary position which the Welsh have preferred, their high pride of ancestry, their resolution to protract the existence of a separate language, their defensive habits in points of litigation, the scenery of a region which has features and attractions of its own—all these things he believes to have conspired to retain in the music of the principality a certain primitive character. Little doubt, it seems, is entertained among the musical critics of the other three portions of the United Kingdom about the genuine character of Welsh melodies.

An important remark is made by him concerning the great influence of the harp, the characteristic instrument of Wales, on the symmetry of Welsh tunes. With its three rows of strings—the third appearing to be anticipatory of the pedals of the modern harp—there is little temptation for those caprices of interval which have been generated by stringed instruments of less elaboration in arrangement. "The charm of this harp is not merely such as belongs to the intimate correspondence between master and servant, which it seems to encourage, but in its own peculiar tones. The harp, though somewhat neglected of late, continues to be one of the primitive sources of melody"—not merely because of its peculiar tones, but because of its simplicity of scale. Besides the harp-tunes of Wales, conveniently so-called, there are singers' tunes of great vocal purity and clearness. The Welsh will dance for twelve hours at a time, but they appear to have few or no national dance-tunes of their own, such as the Scotch reel, the Irish jig, or the English hornpipe. Handel is believed to have worked with

Welsh materials in composing some of the music of his Deborah and also of his Acis and Galatea; but, speaking in a general way, only a few Welsh melodies become nationalised in other countries.

Passing from West Britain to North Britain, from Wales to Scotland, we get into a hot-bed of disputation. Scotchmen and Irishmen have long been fighting for the nationality of certain airs; while of late English musical critics have been rushing in to get as much credit for England out of Scotland and Ireland as they could have any chance of obtaining.

It is declared by Mr. Chorley (somewhat to our surprise) that "on the Continent Scottish music is the term applied to all the national airs of this country." So far has this gone that even in a collection arranged by Beethoven the Welsh tune *Of a Noble Race* was Shenkin, the English *Sally in our Alley*, and the Irish *Last Rose of Summer*, are all included among Scotch music. This, if it be really the case, may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that Scotland had a civilised court of her own down to a late period; and that thus "the products of the north country were naturally more largely interchanged with those of other European countries than could be the products of exclusive Wales or of careless, harassed Ireland." Boieldieu has incorporated a few Scotch melodies in his opera, *La Dame Blanche*—not unreasonably, seeing that the plot of the opera is mostly based on Sir Walter Scott's *Monastery*. Similarly, Auld Lang Syne is worked in among the tunes in *Niedermayer's Marie Stuart*. As a third example, Scottish melodies are worked into Mendelssohn's beautiful *Scotch Symphony*.

The bagpipe of Scotland claims to be superior to that of any other country, and not without some justification. It is humorously remarked that any one of the stalwart pipers whose performances are so attractive in our Scottish regiments could blow down, by the force and percussion of his drone, any rival from the sister island, from Calabria, from the Basque Provinces, or from the centre of France.

There is a peculiarity in much Scottish music, technically known as the "snap," produced by a rapid staccato succession of two notes, say a semiquaver followed by a dotted quaver. Many of the tunes, such as *Alister McAlister*, owe much of their piquancy to this snap. Triple time is not so frequently observed in Scotch music as in that of the sister

island; the reel and the strathspey, different as they are in character, are alike in this. Nevertheless, the favourite tunes Tweedside, and Wood and Married and A', are cited as examples of melodies in the three-bar rhythm very peculiar in effect.

Turning next to Ireland, we receive a reminder that any critic in search of nationality in the music must keep a calm ear and a keen eye; so much will he be beset by the claims to very great antiquity, the possible existence of Phœnicians on the island at one period and the Basque Spaniards at another. It is proved nevertheless that Ireland knew the harp and the bagpipe from an early time. One point in dispute is whether the Irish harp or the Welsh harp had the earlier origin. Mr. Bunting, a leading authority on these matters, deriving his information partly from old harpers but principally from critical research, expressed a belief that the Irish harp was known for its thirty strings at least five or six centuries ago. One of these old harps is now preserved in Trinity College, Dublin; it is believed to have been played by a noted harpist, O'Neill, more than a century ago at Limerick. Mr. Bunting describes several varieties of Irish harp; such as the common harp, the high-headed harp, the down-bending harp, the harp of Craffin or Crofton, and a portable harp at one time used in ecclesiastical ceremonies.

The important point for us here is the influence exerted by the instrument on the music. Mr. Chorley quotes the melodies of *The Lamentation*, and *Try if it is in Time*, as examples of the seeming caprice, the real deficiency of certain musical intervals, which mark a large section of the melodies of Ireland, probably the most ancient. Attempts have been made to group into classes such quaintly-named melodies as *Lulling Music*, *Music of Cool Shade*, *Wilderness Music*, *Lake Music*, *Flowing Tide Music*, *Lamentation or Wailing Music*, and many others. The old harpers were in many cases blind men, some of whom were poor relations belonging to good families, and eked out a living by itinerant harping. Shelter and food and a kind reception were always ready for them in reward for their music. The name of one of them—Rory Dall—is recorded. He crossed over after a time from Ireland to Scotland, where, as tradition will have it, he played before Mary Queen of Scots. Then there was Ecklin Kane, a blind harper, who wandered through France, Spain, and Italy, was patronised by the Pretender, and

complimented by Lord Macdonald of Skye; but becoming rather a rollicking, riotous fellow, the Scottish gentry sometimes cooled him down a little by cutting his fingernails so short that he could not harp until they had grown again!

The old Irish bagpipe was very similar to the Calabrian pipe sometimes played by itinerant Italians in the streets of London and others of our large towns. Our author adverts to a queer odd rapparee humour in the Irish pipe marches, and gives the music of one bearing a close resemblance to the impassioned jig danced on the cabin door taken off its hinges, as described by Miss Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, and Gerald Griffin.

The home-tour we are taking brings us at last back to England, probably less peculiar in its musical characteristics than the other sections of the British Islands. There is wanting an indefinable something which is found in them, and which also enables the melodies of France, Spain, and Scandinavia to be recognisable one from another. Mr. Chorley states that in looking through the collections of English tunes brought together by Mr. W. Chappell, he was struck with the scantiness of anything equivalent to Scotch and Irish and Welsh melodies in regard to freshness and novelty. But this is a point on which doctors differ, so we must tread cautiously.

English composers and musicians obtained celebrity earlier than English painters, except, possibly, the special class of painters employed on stained glass windows for ecclesiastical buildings. The English madrigals and four-part music of Queen Elizabeth's time are preserved to this day, and are known abroad as well as here. Music, like many other refining agencies, was discouraged by the Puritans, but sprang up again into new life after the Restoration. As to the snatches of song introduced in Shakespeare's plays, doubts are expressed whether the nationality of the music could be clearly established, however characteristic it may be. Mr. Chorley speaks very favourably, however, of Dr. Arne's music to a few of the favourite songs in the dramas of our great national bard. He cites the music to the *Tempest* and *As You Like It*, especially the lovely songs *Where the Bee sucks*, and *Blow blow thou Wintry Wind*, as possessing alike originality, freshness, and beauty. Sir Henry R. Bishop's settings of several of Shakespeare's songs are also admired for their power and animation. Bid me

Discourse, the delicious canzonette By the Simplicity of Venus's Doves, and the Orpheus duet, are named as examples almost wholly due to English inspiration. "Bishop had a fairyland of his own. Peculiarities of character alone stood between him and European fame. And then he fell on evil days, when the music of the Continent was streaming into England, and when those in whose service his life was passed"—i.e., theatre managers and music publishers—"tempted and perhaps constrained him to make concessions to our then popular taste: a luckless and foolish thing if it be done by any artist in defiance of conscience; a sad thing if it be done with acquiescence of conscience." Alas! the bread-and-cheese question intrudes itself here, as many a man of genius knows to his sorrow. It was a good sign that Bishop's music was the best when the words to which he composed it were the best. This denoted a union of poetry and music in the artist, whether or not he ever wrote literary poetry.

The glee is a fine and original characteristic in English music. Ye Spotted Snakes was charmingly set as a glee by Stevens. Nymphs of the Forest and By Celia's Arbour are cited as gems of glee melody, the composer of which, Dr. Horsley, wisely spurned in most instances the setting of any but choice words. This has suggested to our author a sarcastic fling at those composers who have so little love of real poetry that they do not seem to mind whether they waste a melody on the pence table or on a scrap of advertisements from the Times. Canons, again, are as characteristic in England, perhaps, as in any other country, some of them quite distinguished for their mastery and elegance. As to the Catch, it is even more thoroughly ours. There is nothing at all like it in the music of Scotland, Ireland, or Wales. The tunes seem, as it were, to laugh as they go on in enjoyment of the fun. Old Chairs to Mend, Ah how Sophia, and many others of kindred nature are musical jokes, melodic pleasantries, as exhilarating to the singers as to the hearers. Mr. Chorley well describes the general character of these effusions: "These odd, fanciful compositions, in which words trip up words, and rhymes and phrases jostle, with as desperate a disregard of common sense as though Hood had wrought the web and sown it thickly with puns, can hardly be appreciated by anyone save he be an Englishman born." Once again, the

hornpipe belongs to us beyond all dispute; the Sailor's Hornpipe and the College Hornpipe are sui generis, differing from the Highland fling, the Scotch reel, the Irish jig, the Neapolitan tarantula, the pas seul of any other country.

It seems to be agreed among those who judge us without undue partiality that we do not quite equal foreign nations in the production of great instrumental composers and great instrumental players. On the other hand, we English are credited with the ability to sing at sight more readily and accurately than most other nations. Our voices, too, though not of the finest quality in any one particular, are noted for their equable distribution of register, their power of doing justice to all tones, whether high up or low down the scale. Clearness of articulation, however, cannot well be claimed as one of our excellencies; we maul the words very sadly in our singing.

VISITED ON THE CHILDREN.

BY THEO. GIFT.

PROLOGUE.

"ANY hope? Oh, ma'am, we wish there was! She's just dying as fast as she can. The doctor says it can't be more than an hour at most now."

"The doctor?"

"Yes, ma'am—not Dr. Hamilton, but the other one. He was 'ere three times yesterday, an' only left ten minutes ago; an' he said it won't be more than an hour now, for she's sinking fast, he said, and the 'stremities are getting cold already."

A servant girl, the last speaker; her face, one pleasant and comely enough at other times, all swelled and blurred with tears, and her neat white muslin apron crumpled into a damp untidy rag, from the same cause, as she stands twisting it between her hands at the gate of one of those old-fashioned, creeper-covered cottages in the region of St. John's Wood. To look at the house, indeed, it might be in the heart of the country, shut in as it is with fruit trees and horse-chestnuts now in full blossom, and high garden walls overhung by closely matted ivy and Virginian creeper rankly luxuriant of pale green leaf and rosy-fingered tendrils. In point of fact the quiet lane in which it stands, and in which there is not even a casual passer-by, is within three minutes walk of "Lord's" and less than ten of one of the most noisy and crowded of London thoroughfares, the

faint hum of which even penetrates to the gate where the little colloquy above narrated is taking place.

There is a brougham waiting outside it. Not one of those tiny toy vehicles which you see drawn up beside the railings in the Row with a little group of men round it, and the head and shoulders of one favoured individual buried in its perfumed recesses, as he exchanges chaff and flattery with the dainty-looking creature smothered in costly furs or laces within. Not a brougham of this sort, with its almost suspicious spick and span newness, its young coachman, and the invariable black-muzzled pug hanging out a superfluous yard of red tongue from the off window; but a handsome, goodly-sized carriage with a double crest on its panels, an elderly Jehu, wide of girth and grey of whisker, holding in the pair of fat bays who stand waving their glossy heads and stamping their feet in impatience at being kept so long; and a footman solemn and pompous enough for a bishop; an equipage altogether in keeping with the high-coloured, sternly-handsome face thrust far enough out of the window to be able to speak in a lowered tone to the maid already mentioned, and whose sobs have broken out again with her last words.

"Hope!" she repeats, crumpling her unfortunate apron still more as she dabs one corner of it into her eyes. "Oh! no, m'm, and such a dear young lady as she was, never a cross word to no one, and nursed me when I was ill once as if I'd been her own sister. Cook and me often said as we'd never get such another mistress nowhere; though cook never thought 'twould be for long, for anyone could see death written in her sweet face. An' to think of her layin' dying up in her pretty room this minute, an' not even able to speak to master when he arrived! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

If the girl were not crying so unaffectedly herself, the want of any answering sympathy in the face at the carriage window, untouched by either pity or sorrow, might have attracted her attention and caused her to modify the outward expression of her grief; but her face is hidden in her apron altogether now; and though even the wooden propriety of the fat coachman (himself a married man) is dashed with an extra shade of soberness at the thought that the lady, for whom his mistress has called to enquire, lies dying behind those white bedroom curtains puffing gently in the breeze up yonder, the

rigid lines about that mistress's well-shaped mouth do not relax by so much as one hair's-breadth; only at the maid's last words a swift dark flush, less like pain or sorrow than a flash of intense and angry repulsion, passes across her face for a moment, to disappear as quickly again, however, as she asks:

"Your master is with—is upstairs at present, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am. He's never left 'er since he got here, at about five o'clock this morning. We telegraphed for him before seven yesterday evening; but I suppose he were out somewhere and didn't get it. Pore dear mistress! it was the death of her his not doing so; for that was how she brought on the second bleeding. She would keep asking, 'Has he come? Oh! do you think he is coming?' and starting up at every sound till she brought on another fit of coughing; and then when he did come she wasn't even conscious of it, she was that far gone. It would ha' broken your heart to see the look on his face when he found it was so."

It does not seem to have that effect in the description to judge from the look on the lady's face. She only asks, in the same quiet tone:

"And she—your mistress—has never spoken or been conscious since?"

"Never once, ma'am, I believe; and Dr. Beevor said 'twasn't likely now, that she might just sink away from exhaustion in the sort of half-sleep she was in, an' no one know the minute she went—I beg your pardon, ma'am," checking herself suddenly as if struck for the first time by the strange stony way in which she is listened to, "perhaps I oughtn't to be talking this way; but I thought maybe you were an old friend of mistress, and hadn't seen her for some time. I don't remember seeing your face before; an' I've been with 'er nearly a year, but——"

"You are quite right. I am an old friend, a very old one; though I have never been here before. Pray go on telling me all you can. This has been a great shock to me. I had hoped to see your mistress."

"Indeed, ma'am, I'm very sorry. It must be a great trouble to you, and a disappointment too; but Dr. Beevor, he told us, an' Dr. Hamilton as well, that she mustn't be disturbed for no one and nothink. And ten to one she wouldn't know you, ma'am. Nurse said as she barely seemed to look at master, an' every time I've gone near the

dressing-room door—it's left open, like the window, so as to give her plenty of air—she's always been lying just the same: most as if she was dead already, an' him kneeling beside her, poor soul! just as he've been since he first came in."

The flush on the lady's cheek deepens a little, and for the first time there is a visible irresolution about the lines of her mouth. For a moment she hesitates; then, as the servant seems about to step backwards, leans a little more forward, and addresses her in a lower, more hurried tone.

"You say the door is open. I have come a long way—from the country, indeed. You will understand what it would be to you if you had done so, and only to be too late. Do you think I could just stand at the door for one second? One look would be enough."

"Indeed, ma'am, I hardly know. I'm very sorry; but—" the girl is beginning, somewhat embarrassed by the request, when she is interrupted.

"You need not fear being blamed," the visitor says, in a manner slightly more urgent, not to say imperious, than before. "I would not ask you if I had not the—right. I am more than a friend. I am a near relation. Your master would tell you so if he saw me; but it would be cruel to disturb him now; and I need not assure you that I will not run the very smallest risk of rousing her—your mistress."

"Oh! as to rousing her, ma'am"—there are still tears in the girl's eyes; but they brighten, nevertheless. What more natural to the minds of the lower orders than the desire to look on death in any form and for any reason? Sarah has crept to the dressing-room door a dozen times already; and for all her unaffected love and sorrow for her young mistress, there is something not unpleasantly exciting in being able to take another person there—"she's past rousing now, poor dear! if you'll excuse me speaking so free; an' as for him, I don't believe he'd hear a cannon-shot if you fired it off at his ears."

"Then I will go in. It will only be for one look," the lady says with determination, and opening the carriage-door, alights before Sarah has time to reconsider her semi-permission. It is too late now to do so, for with a brief, "Drive up and down till I come out," to the coachman, her interlocutor turns to her, adding simply, "I will follow you," and does so accordingly, through the green door in the wall, and into the garden within.

A pretty old-fashioned garden full of pretty, old-fashioned, sweet-smelling flowers: a garden that, like the house, might have grown-up miles and miles away from London soot and smoke and turmoil, instead of here on the very outskirts of it. Low wicker chairs (two of them) under the big thorn-tree on the lawn, now shadowed over with a scented snow of blossoms; a work-basket with a bit of knitting lying forgotten on the velvety grass; a rustic table of twisted wood holding a cracked majolica ash-tray; all this she sees at a glance, and draws a fancy picture of two people strolling out after dinner through the French windows of the pretty little drawing-room to enjoy the evening air and talk over the day's work and pleasures: work and pleasures both sweet in their kind, both falling, falling fast with the last moments of life from the dying woman upstairs, as the sweet white blossoms of the may keep falling, falling on the grass below. The tall lady's dark eyes—eyes with unusually thick level brows above them—note silently the whole sad little picture, and more—note the canary singing its little yellow heart out from its gilt cage in the tiny verandah, and the stands of flowers in the square well-warmed hall; note the dainty water-colours adorning the staircase, the graceful ferns and gleaming gold-fish in the window on the landing; all the thousand and one trifles, which show that much love and not a little taste and money have gone hand in hand to furnish a nest for some precious one; and a strangely bitter expression comes over the handsome face and hardens the observing eye.

Not that she has any look of being poor or wanting in care and taste herself! Her lead-coloured gown is of cashmere so fine and soft that its voluminous train and flouncings make no slightest rustling as she sweeps the carpet. The lace on her mantle is from Brussels, half a yard in depth, and costly enough to make a miser's mouth water. The very sombreness and almost severity of her attire, which would be better suited to a woman of forty, than one of eight and twenty, which is all she really is, speaks more than her haughty bearing and fat carriage-horses for the owner being a person not only possessed of wealthy surroundings, but accustomed to them all her life. Has love never mingled with her cup of luxury; or is it only the thought that love, as little as money, can purchase one

half-hour's more grace to the young life before which both have been laid, that makes her lip curl for a moment in a half smile of scorn? Hard to answer this sort of question!

Stepping softly on the points of her toes, and even holding her breath to make no sound, the maid leads the way to a small room furnished as a dressing-room, daintily and prettily, like the rest of the house, but now littered over with the appliances of a sick chamber, medicine bottles and glasses, an open medicine-chest, a man's hat and overcoat lying on a chair; and stopping short, points with her forefinger to an inner door beyond.

"That's her room," she whispers very low. "I won't go in with you, ma'am, they might hear; and please step softly. You won't stay long?"

"I will only stay for one look. They will not see or hear me. I will be very careful; don't be afraid."

The lady speaks in the same tone, but with a firmness which, if the girl were afraid of her composure giving way, must be reassuring. There is no time for more, for in the next moment she has passed into the room, and is standing gazing through the half-open door into the sorrowful chamber within.

Darker there! So dark, indeed, that at first, and coming out of the sunlight, she can only make out a tent-bedstead, hung with cloudy white draperies, and with something like a streak of golden light flung across the pillows at the head of it. Then, as her eyes grow accustomed to the dimness, they see more: a small face, white as the pillows themselves, beneath that wave of golden hair, and something dark—a man's head—buried in the sheets beside it. There is no sound in the room, save a faint laboured breathing, and now and then a gasping sob wrung from the watcher as he kneels there, feeling the last pulsations of the heart, against which his brow rests, grow fainter and fainter till they seem to flag and stop altogether. Then—all of a sudden—there is a rally, a quick pulse or two, a fluttering of the lips over which death has already cast a pale blue tinge, and a sound too low for its meaning to be distinguishable by any but the one for whom it is meant, and who lifts his head quickly, his haggard feverish eyes fixed in hungry yearning on those whose pale lids are lifted at last in a parting look of recognition. Yet he does not speak. He seems afraid to do anything but look

at and fold his arms closer round her till she says his name again, a little louder. Even the unseen visitor still standing by the door can hear the words.

"Henry! You came—at last."

"My own darling, if I could but have reached you sooner! If I had only known! But I never got your telegram till this morning. I had no idea— Would to God it had not been needed: that I could have stayed with you always, and taken care of you."

"If—I get well—you will."

No answer this time. Difficult, indeed, to give any to such a speech, when looking at the speaker one can see the finger of death travelling from the faltering lips down to the flagging heart, and can almost count the seconds it will take to reach there; but the girl herself misunderstands the silence, and the dying voice takes a sharper tone.

"You said so—'in the summer—when you get well;' and it will soon be summer now. I—dear, don't—don't look that way. I will get well. I—Henry, keep me, hold me, don't let me go, or—"

The pitiful appeal, rising gradually into a sob, half terrified, half tender, breaks off suddenly into a weak strangled cry. There is a little stir and confusion in the room, a sound of someone rising to his feet, of pouring water, of a few half-smothered sounds, but what is doing or passing the unmoved witness at the dressing-room door cannot see; for, fearful of being seen herself, she has drawn back from the opening, one hand clutching the folds of her gown, the other pressed against her lips as if to keep down even a rising breath, lest it interfere with her sense of hearing.

No need for that. The silence which follows speaks more loudly than any tongue, and is only broken by a sound terrible to most women's ears, overmastering even this one's composure, and turning her face to the whiteness of that one upon the pillow within—the agony of a strong man's grief.

"Amy! Amy! My darling, my only love, my own—" the voice breaking off between every tender epithet as he pours down passionate kisses on the lips where that Finger now rests, never to be lifted. "Oh, my God, pity me! I can't lose you. Amy, my one love, try to look at me. My wife!"

There is a sound on the staircase outside. Sarah has been telling nurse that

one of mistress's relations—those relations only vaguely heard of hitherto, and who have never before visited the delicate young wife in her pretty home—is upstairs now—has begged leave just to look in on the dying girl; and nurse and cook are both of opinion that Sarah is much to blame, and it is “like her foolishness” to dream of permitting such a thing. “A grand lady in a kerridge an’ pair, indeed! And what if she were? More shame to her never to ha’ come here to see missis before, pore dear! An’ she just dyin’, as anyone could see with ‘arf an eye, for months back. Anyone but Sarah would ha’ told the lady so;” and nurse feels it to be her duty to go upstairs at once, lest the quiet of the sick-room may have been disturbed even now by any unauthorised intrusion. The little colloquy has not lasted six minutes, and the two women, Sarah following nurse in much contrition of spirit, are almost at the top of the stairs, when the tall lady comes quietly out of the dressing-room, and advances to meet them with the same stately ease of step and manner which had overcome the little maid’s scruples before.

Even the nurse, always the most important person in a sick house, is impressed by it, and in place of the indignant remonstrance on her lips, is commencing a much milder,

“Ma’am, you ought not to have been shown up. My poor mistress is——” when she is interrupted.

“Your mistress is dead, I think,” the lady says calmly. “You had better go in to her. You may be wanted.” And so, with hardly a glance at the horrified faces of the two women, or so much as a word of softening or explanation, she passes them both and goes quietly down the stairs and out into the smooth green lawn again, where the sweet white may blossoms are falling, and the fragrant lilacs and golden laburnum boughs are tossing and swaying in the breeze. Her carriage is just outside the door, and the footman jumps down and holds the door open obsequiously; perhaps with a little added attention because of the change in his mistress’s face since he last saw it. Did anything living ever look

at him out of such a dead-white mask, even the very lips blanched to a kind of ashen lividness?

“Where to, ma’am?”

A moment’s hesitation. The birds are singing loudly among the rose-white spires of the horse-chestnut blossoms. The drawn curtains of that open window above are puffing and fluttering in the wind like a white flag of truce. John Thomas wonders if his mistress is going to faint, and, so wondering, manages with well-trained propriety to banish every vestige of expression from his face. Then, with an effort, she recovers herself, and answers him.

“To Charing Cross Station.”

They drive there accordingly, and the lady alights, then turns on the step to give a further order.

“I am going back by train. You will return to the house we have just come from, and send in word that Dr. Hamilton’s carriage has called for him. He will be there by then, I expect, and will probably like to come back with you. If he should not be ready you must wait for him. It does not matter if the horses are kept out rather long for once. Stay, you are to give him this.”

“This” is a note, on the outside of which the doctor’s name is written in pencil; and as the servant takes it his mistress turns from him and enters the station, her handsome head erect, her handsome dress sweeping behind her, her step and bearing as stately and composed as though she had but come from some ordinary call of ceremony; but wearing that same white mask pressed down upon her face as though Death itself had branded it there: the sign manual of some unhallowed act never to be taken away or obliterated on this side of the grave.

And—we shall meet her again years later and note it for ourselves—it never is!

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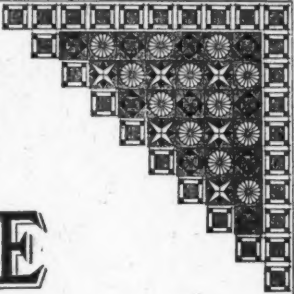

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£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£	£	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£	£	£ s. d.
25	19 17 6	298 2 6	342	1,030	0 16 2	19 17 6	397 10 0	600	1,600	19 4 2
35	26 7 6	395 12 6	495	1,150	6 4 5	26 7 6	597 10 0	868	1,770	38 12 5
45	37 19 2	559 7 6	745	1,340	20 2 7	37 19 2	759 3 4	1,353	2,160	94 4 7

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25	42 10 10	425 8 4	440	1,500	13 0 0	32 6 8	485 0 0	693	2,090	30 10 0
35	52 8 4	524 3 4	551	1,470	17 10 0	40 0 0	600 0 0	887	2,060	44 14 0
45	67 7 6	673 15 0	710	1,450	26 0 0	52 2 6	781 17 6	1,174	2,110	73 16 0

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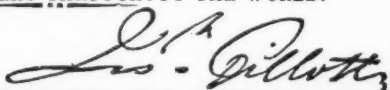
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